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Washington, DC 20515-6015

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April 20, 2005

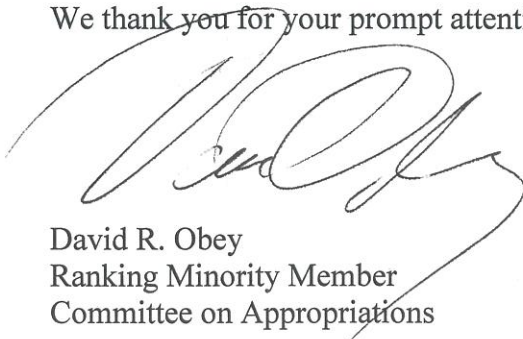
Acting Inspector General Richard Skinner
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Inspector General Skinner:

We were extremely disappointed today to read your report entitled "Irregularities in the Development of the Transportation Security Operations Center (TSOC)." It is inexcusable that the TSA tried to hide the fact that it spent over half a million taxpayer dollars on elaborate decorative furnishings, with a 20% vendor markup and overpaid the vendor on top of that. It is also inexcusable that TSA built a fitness center in the TSOC for 79 employees to use at a cost of \$350,000, when DHS Headquarters built a fitness center to accommodate 2,550 employees at a cost of \$650,000. TSA spent \$4,430 per employee constructing this fitness center; in contrast, DHS spent \$255 per employee. Our homeland security dollars must be spent improving the nation's homeland security, not surreptitiously gold-plating office space.

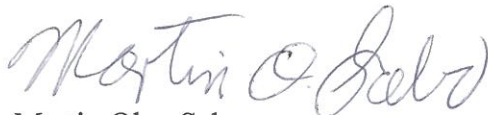
We were also shocked to read in a footnote on page 15 that the then-TSA Deputy Administrator told you that TSA allowed many people to work as the contracting officer's technical representative (COTR), a critical contract management position, without appropriate COTR training. This is a recipe for contracting disaster and financial abuse. Therefore, we request that you audit all TSA contracts where the COTR did not have COTR training. We are strongly concerned that the financial abuse found in both this audit of the TSOC and an earlier IG audit on TSA's management suite, are harbingers of overall financial mismanagement. As stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, we need to understand the size of the problem quickly.

We thank you for your prompt attention to this request.



David R. Obey
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations

Sincerely,



Martin Olav Sabo
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations